

Message Text

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COMIDEASTFOR, CINCUSNAVEUR AND USCINCEUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR OAU FR SF IS KE KS UG CN MD NZ MR SO

SUBJECT: 13TH ORDINARY OAU SUMMIT: OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

SUMMARY. THE 13TH ORDINARY OAU SUMMIT DISPLAYED UNANIMITY
IN PREDICTABLE AREAS, FOR EXAMPLE HARSH CRITICISM OF SOUTH
AFRICA OVER THE SOWETO KILLINGS, OF ISRAEL FOR THE COMMANDO
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RAID AT ENTEBBE, OF FRANCE FOR SEPARATING MAYOTTE FROM THE

COMORES. BUT ON THE ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE RATHER THAN RHETORIC THE GENERAL IMPRESSION CREATED WAS ONE OF SISHARMONY, ACRIMONY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE. OAU MEMBERS SHOWED AN ABILITY TO UNITE ON CERTAIN BASIC ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THEM SUCH AS THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, BUT IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THEIR ENERGIES WERE OFTEN DISSIPATED ON DISPUTES WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS OVER EVEN MORE COMPELLING ISSUES INVOLVING TERRITORY OR IDEOLOGY.
END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO SOME PEOPLE WHO ATTEND OAU MEETINGS REGULARLY, THE ORGANIZATION AND FACILITIES FOR THE 13TH ORDINARY SUMMIT WERE AMONG THE BEST EVER. FEW HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE WARM HOSPITALITY OF MAURITIUS, HOWEVER, AS ATTENDANCE BY THE LEADING POLITICALR FIGURES OF AFRICA FELL TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL IN THE HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION. A FEW DID SHOW UP -- NOTABLY SENGHOR, AMIN, NIMEIRI, BONGO, OULD DADDAH, MANCHAM, JAWARA, TEFERI BANTE, KAUNDA -- BUT MOST STAYED AWAY. SPECULATION HERE ABOUT THE REASONS FOR THE ABSENCES STRESSED THE DISTANCE OF MAURITIUS FROM MOST AFRICAN CAPITALS, PROTOCOLAIRE RESERVATIONS ABOUT HOST RAMGOOLAM'S LESSER STATUS AS A MERE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, AND, ESPECIALLY, FEARS OF A POSSIBLE COUP AT HOME AGAINST A LEADER ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE (AS HAPPENED LAST YEAR TO GOWON OF NIGERIA, AND AS NEARLY HAPPENED THIS YEAR TO NIMEIRI OF THE SUDAN).

2. THE NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS MOTTO ("WE WILL NOT BE DIVIDED") WERE THE SOURCE OF IRONIC AMUSEMENT, FOR DISUNITY PREVAILED OVER UNITY IN MANY OF THE DELIBERATIONS. AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHOSE CONFLICTS DOMINATED THE SESSIONS INCLUDED ETHIOPIA VS. SOMALIA OVER THE FTAI, ALGERIA VS. MORROCCO AND MAURITANIA OVER THE WESTERN SAHARA, UGANDA VS. KENYA OVER THE ISRAALI COMMANDO RAID AT ENTEBBE, AND SUDAN VS. LIBYA OVER THE COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST NIMEIRI. THERE WAS ADDITIONAL DIVISIVENESS AMONG THE FACTIONS OF THE ANC OF ZIMBABWE. THE UGANDA-KENYA AND SUDAN-LIBYA DISPUTES ERUPTED ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE CONFERENCE AND MOVED ON TO OTHER FORA SUCH AS THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. THE FTAI ISSUE WAS PARTIALLY SMOOTHED OVER, WITH FURTHER CONSIDERATION
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POSTPONED TO A ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE OF ALL FTAI FACTIONS TO BE HELD IN ACCRA NEXT MONTH. THE DISPUTE OVER WESTERN SAHARA WAS THE MOST SERIOUS OF ALL, WITH MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA THREATENING TO LEAVE THE OAU IF THE MATTER WAS EVEN DISCUSSED. THIS ISSUE WAS PUT FORWARD FOR LATER CONSIDERATION BY A SPECIAL OAU SUMMIT, AND IT REMAINS FAR FROM SETTLED.

3. AS IS PERHAPS NORMAL, THE OAU CONFERENCE THIS YEAR WAS DOMINATED BY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS WHICH CAME INTO PROMINENCE JUST BEFORE OR DURING THE MEETINGS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTED THE SOWETO RIOTS WHICH SHORTLY PRECEDED THE OPENING SESSION. THE SUMMIT ITSELF TURNED MUCH OF ITS ATTENTION TO THE ISRAELI RAID ON ENTEBBE WHICH OCCURED IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFERENCE, AND THE COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST NIMEIRI, WHICH TOOK PLACE JUST PRIOR TO THE SUMMIT OPENING. ALTHOUGH PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE RESOLUTIONS PREPARED BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THE ONE ON WESTERN SAHARA) WERE ADOPTED WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE OAU MEETING WAS ONE OF DISHARMONY AND CONTROVERSY BECAUSE OF THESE DIVISION-CAUSING EXTERNAL EVENTS.

4. FRANCE AND ISRAEL WERE THE PRINCIPAL NON-AFRICAN TARGETS OF OAU RHETORIC AT THE 1976 MEETING. FRANCE WAS ATTACKED FOR SUPPLYING NUCLEAR PLANTS TO SOUTH AFRICA, FOR SEPARATING MAYOTTE FROM THE COMOROS AND FOR ALLEGED FOOT-DRAGGING ON GRANTING INDEPENDENCE TO THE FTAI. BESIDES THE ENTEBBE INCIDENT, ISRAEL'S "CRIME" WAS ALLEGED COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA, HIGHLIGHTED BY VORSTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL. SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF WAS OF COURSE THE FAVORITE TARGET OF ALL, WITH THE FOCUS ON SOWETO AS THE MOST SERIOUS INSTANCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE COUNTRY'S BLACK MAJORITY SINCE SHARPEVILLE. ECONOMIC TIES AND SPORTS LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WERE CRITICIZED, AND NEW ZEALAND WAS SINGLED OUT BECAUSE OF THE TOUR OF ITS ALL BLACKS RUGBY TEAM TO SOUTH AFRICA. A BOYCOTT OF THE OLYMPICS WAS RECOMMENDED IF NEW ZEALAND IS ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE. THE KOREAN QUESTION WAS NOT RAISED OR EVEN MENTIONED BY ANYONE AT THE CONFERENCE.

5. THE UNITED STATES GOT OFF LIGHTLY, IN THEIR VIEW OF ALL
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OBSERVERS. THE SHARPEST CRITICISM DIRECTED AGAINST THE US WAS OVER OUR VETO OF ANGOLA'S ADMISSION TO THE UN. A NUMBER OF SPEAKERS MENTIONED THIS, NOT EXCEPTING UNSYG WALDHEIM (WHO, THOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION THE US BY NAME, EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ANGOLA WOULD BE PERMITTED TO JOIN THE UN IN KEEPING WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSALITY). WE WERE ALSO CRITICIZED FOR FAILING TO PAY OUR DUES TO UNESCO, WITH THE THREAT THAT ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN TO CANCEL OUR VOTING RIGHTS. SOME SPEAKERS MENTIONED ALLEGED COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA, WITH REFERENCES TO SECRETARY KISSINGER'S MEETING WITH VORSTER, BUT PRIVATELY MOST DELEGATES WERE MORE CURIOUS ABOUT POSSIBLE RESULTS FROM THE TALKS THAN CRITICAL OF THEIR HAVING BEEN HELD.

6. THE FOLLOWING WERE THE PRINCIPAL TOPICS AND THEMES

RAISED BY OAU DELEGATES IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ME AT THE SEVERAL PUBLIC FUNCTIONS AND CEREMONIES: (A) HARSH CRITICISM OF THE FRENCH NUCLEAR DEAL WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND THE THREAT THAT BLACK AFRICAN STATES WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN NUCLEAR ARMS BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE TO COUNTER THE SOUTH AFRICAN DANGER; (B) A STRONGLY NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE US VETO OF ANGOLA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE UN; (C) SOME CRITICISM OF THE GREATLY INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO KENYA AND ZAIRE AS REPRESENTING THE "INTRODUCTION" OF COLD WAR COMPETITION TO AFRICA; (D) INTEREST IN THE KISSINGER-VORSTER TALKS; (E) GENEROUS PRAISE FOR AMBASSADOR SCRANTON, BOTH FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AT THE UN AND ON HIS TOUR OF AFRICA; (F) ADVOCACY OF ACTIVE AND DIRECT SUPPORT BY THE US TO THE AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, WITH THE THREAT THAT OTHERWISE THESE MOVEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO TURN TO THE COMMUNIST POWERS FOR THE ARMS THEY NEED.

7. ALTHOUGH ISRAEL WAS ROUNDLY CRITICIZED, IN GENERAL AND FOR THE ENTEBBE RAID, MIDDLE EAST ISSUES AS SUCH DID NOT FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN THE DEBATES AND IN FACT WERE NOTABLE FOR THEIR ABSENCE FROM THIS OAU SESSION. UNSYG WALDHEIM STARTLED MANY BY SPENDING MORE TIME ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN HIS SPEECH TO THE OAU OPENING THAN ANY OF THE AFRICAN LEADERS. INCLUDING THE ARABS, DID IN THEIRS. THE US WAS MENTIONED NEGATIVELY AS A SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL, BUT NOT IN AN EXTREME FASHION.
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8. THE STAR PERSONALITY AT THE CONFERENCE WAS OF COURSE IDI AMIN, BECAUSE OF HIS SIZE, HIS CHESTFUL OF GLITTERING MEDALS, HIS HALF-LITERATE HALF-COMIC IMPROVISATIONS, AND THE IMAGE OF BRUTE, POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE STRENGTH HE RADIATES. HIS LECTURES ABOUT THE NEED FOR UNITY AND HIS BOAST THAT HE WILL MARCH HIS TROOPS TO CAPE TOWN WERE HEARTILY IF MIRTHFULLY APPLAUDED, AND FORTUNATELY FOR HIM HE WAS GONE FROM MAURITIUS BY THE TIME THE ISRAELIS GAVE VIVID PROOF OF HIS INABILITY EVEN TO DEFEND HIS OWN AIRPORT.
KEELEY

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